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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HONG KONG 000011

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SUBJECT: HONG KONG DEMOCRATS DENIED ENTRY TO MACAU FOR
ARTICLE 23 RALLY

REF: (A) HONG KONG 2258 (B) HONG KONG 2229

Classified By: Acting Consul General Christopher J. Marut for Reasons 1
.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: Over twenty Hong Kong activists, including nine legislators, traveling to Macau to participate in a rally opposing Macau's Article 23 legislation were denied entry December 20, Macau Special Administrative Region Establishment Day. A Macau government press release indicated the group was denied under Macau's Internal Security Law, although legislators told us Macau Immigration officials neither asked them officially to state their purpose of travel nor indicated under what section of the law they were being denied entry. Macau democrats protested the action, but told us no local media would print their statement. The Hong Kong government limited itself to noting Macau's right to determine its own immigration policies. A vocal sector of the Macau community applauded the decision, opposing interference in Macau affairs by Hong Kong activists. End summary.

12. (C) Comment: Despite having the votes to pass whatever law it wishes, the Macau Government to date has "played fair" in the Article 23 debate, even admitting firebrand legislator Leung "Long Hair" Kwok-hung to Macau previously to attend an earlier protest (ref B). That it chose to refuse entry to the Hong Kong group this time probably has to do with the large size of the group (the previous visit was by only three Hong Kong legislators) and the coincidence with Establishment Day events. The result was probably more media coverage than would have occurred had the legislators been allowed into Macau. Had they been admitted, the Macau government has the influence to ensure any local media coverage was relegated to the back pages (or even dropped), and international media might not have picked up the story at all. For the democrats in both regions, this action was a step beyond the parameters we understood they had set for themselves. The Macau democrats remain mindful that public sentiment backs the government, and that being seen as close to "unpatriotic trouble-makers" like "Long Hair" can cost them at the ballot box. The Hong Kong democrats had led us to believe they were in solidarity with their Macau counterparts, but were also taking a back seat on this issue. Such a large delegation, including senior pan-democratic party leaders, traveling to participate in a protest suggests a calculation that the stakes have risen sufficiently to warrant more risk. End comment.

13. (C) In a clearly pre-meditated decision, Macau immigration officials denied entry to a group of Hong Kong activists traveling to attend a December 20 rally organized by Macau activists including the pro-democracy New Macau Association (NMA). The Macau government reported 24 people denied entry, including eight members of Hong Kong's Legislative Council (LegCo). Media reported some of the travelers from Hong Kong, including some legislative aides, were able to enter. Citing Macau's Internal Security Law, the Public Security

Police Force (which controls immigration) stated their obligation "to reject the entry of ineligible non-residents in order to maintain public security and public order." LegCo members Cyd Ho and Emily Lau both told us Macau officials refused to cite a specific section of the law. Ho said they were never formally asked the purpose of their travel. All those denied entry refused to sign statements presented by Macau authorities acknowledging they were denied. Lau told us the standoff lasted about an hour, after which they were sent back to Hong Kong.

14. (C) LegCo members included Democratic Party (DPHK) Chair Albert Ho and Vice Chair Emily Lau, plus DPHK legislators Lee Wing-tat and Kam Nai-wai; Confederation of Trade Unions General Secretary Lee Cheuk-yan; League of Social Democrats legislator Leung "Long Hair" Kwok-hung; Civic Act-up legislator (and pan-democratic "box lunch" caucus convener) Cyd Ho; and Civic Party (CP) Vice Chair (and former Chief Executive candidate) Alan Leong. A ninth legislator not counted in the Macau government press release, CP Leader Audrey Eu, took a later ferry than the main group and was also refused entry.

15. (C) The Macau Government issued a statement "giving full backing to the police action," although it is extremely unlikely that immigration authorities took the decision themselves. From the Hong Kong side, Secretary for Security Ambrose Lee and Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Stephen Lam both made comments to the media upholding Macau's right to manage its own immigration affairs. Lee was also quoted in Macau media as saying none of the legislators had requested assistance from the Hong Kong Security Bureau,

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which would be the Macau Public Security Police Force's most direct counterpart. Hong Kong media also quoted Hong Kong Central Government Liaison Office (CGLO) Deputy Director Li Gang as respecting Macau's decision, as well as his opinion that Hong Kong's main concerns were the economy and improving people's livelihoods.

16. (SBU) To date, while individual legislators and parties have made statements, LegCo as an institution has not made public comment. Hong Kong media covered the issue, but neither pro-democracy Apple Daily nor centrist Ming Pao leant editorial support to the legislators. East Week, a magazine published by the generally pro-government Sing Tao Group, dismissed the democrats' actions as a "show" for their "little brothers" in Macau, and suggested Alan Leong was looking for publicity in advance of another run for Chief Executive in 2012.

17. (C) Macau media reported on the decision, including the Hong Kong government and CGLO comments and quotes from the NMA, but did not editorialize pro or con. NMA legislator Au Kam-sam told us by e-mail that the NMA had released a statement condemning the government, but that no local media would pick it up. On the other side, directly-elected Macau legislators Chan Meng-kam and Ung Choi-kun, from the pro-government United Citizen's Association, were quoted in the Macau press as opposing outside interference in Macau legal matters. Ten local demonstrators also reportedly picketed at the Macau-Hong Kong ferry terminal to protest Hong Kong people's involvement in an internal Macau matter. Macau Inter-University Institute Lecturer Eric Sautede (protect) told us even some better-educated and -traveled Macanese support the government's decision, noting one of his local friends argued that the Hong Kong visitors intended to "embarrass" Macau.

MARUT